LEAD AGENCY/BUREAU AND/OR SUBCOMMITTEE/WORKING GROUP REPORT (Agencies with Lead Responsibilities Assigned under the new Circular A-16 in Appendix E - http://www.fgdc.gov/publications/a16final.html#appendixe) (Please provide a separate report for each activity for which you have the lead)

1. Program/Activity Name:
   - **Soils Subcommittee - NRCS Chair, Jim R. Fortner**

2. *What are the specific federal programs this data supports?*
   Digital soil survey data supports USDA Farm Bill programs such as;
   - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
   - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
   - Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)
   - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
   - Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP)
   - Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
   - Farmland Protection Program (FPP)
   - Digitized soils data is critical to supporting Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).
   - Other agencies such as USFS, BLM, BIA, USPS, EPA, USGS and FCC utilize the data to support their respective programs and activities. Additional information available upon request.

3. *Uses of Data: How does your data benefit customers and support agency missions?*
   - Soil information is the foundation dataset for the majority of land based planning efforts including those related to natural resources, engineering, community development and agriculture and conservation. Soil information is often a primary input for resource related modeling efforts.
   - Examples of end uses include the determination of highly erodible lands (HEL), prime farmlands and wetlands. In knowing both the physical and chemical characteristics of the soil and the geographic location, NRCS, partners and customers can better manage the land to minimize negative impacts to resources.
   - Federal customers use the data as input to models – examples include the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to assist in power plant placement and EPA to assist in assessing the health of watersheds. Federal, state and local agencies use soils information to assist communities in developing smart growth strategies, addressing drought concerns and addressing groundwater resource issues.
   - External non-federal customers – such as towns and municipalities use the data as a foundation to their community plans, home placement, transportation networks and the like. The data are often supplemented by more detailed analyses, but the NRCS soil data historically forms the basis from which further analyses are conducted.

4. *Charter/Plan: Do you have a current charter or plan for collection? If so - please describe (include how recently the charter/plan was implemented and whether it is in need of update).*
   - Yes, charter developed in 1997.
   - Charter is in need of review.
   - The Chair recommends this subcommittee be reviewed by FGDC leadership for possible retirement or extensive revision of its mission. The group has accomplished its primary goal and lacks dedicated multi-agency interest to continue in its current capacity.

5. *Metadata Status: Is metadata discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse? What percentage of this theme's data has metadata and is in a Clearinghouse node?*

- At this writing (August 2003), approximately 1,550 soil surveys (out of 2,600) are in digital form and fully discoverable via metadata searches on the web and clearinghouse nodes.
- Funding is earmarked in NRCS budget to accelerate and complete digitizing of remaining soil surveys.

6. *Standards: What is the status of this theme's data, process, transfer, and classification standards?*
   - The Soil Geographic Data Standard has been approved by FGDC. This standard is based on standards developed, endorsed and used by the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) Program. This standard is in need of some updating.
   - Data and classification standards are complete.
   - Industry recognized standards for data transfer are used and are not unique to soils.
   - Process standards for the collection, application, documentation, archival and update of soil data are well documented and available on the Internet. Several of the standards are supported by the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) and not necessarily FGDC.

7. *Progress: List FY 2002/2003 activities/progress to date (quantify where possible).*
   - The subcommittee has been inactive.
   - Interest and participation from member agencies has waned and the Chair recommends the Subcommittee be reviewed by FGDC leadership for possible retirement.

8. *Policy: Do you have a formal agency policy in place for full and open access or data sharing? Are you able to fulfill this policy and provide public access with your current agency financial resources as allocated or are you in pursuit of collaborative federal partnerships to support data access?*
   - Though no formal policy exists, discussion among Subcommittee members and cooperators express the intent of open access and data sharing. Soil survey data collected as part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program is considered public information.
   - Soils data are accessible both on the NSDI clearinghouse and other sources, FGDC compliant metadata outlines data limitations and contact information to assist in use and interpretation of the data.
   - NRCS continues to partner to support data collection, integration and delivery. With evolving technology, increased customer expectations and increased data standards resources are thinly distributed. Partnerships are welcome, and in most cases are needed in order to fulfill data collection and distribution demands.

9. *Are there areas or issues regarding lead responsibilities for spatial data themes that require attention, or lessons-learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe.*

NRCS has the lead for the development of soil data. Through the NCSS, NRCS works with many local, state and federal partners. OMB Circular A-16 emphasizes the coordination responsibility of lead agencies to work with all theme data developers to integrate multi-scale data to support national, multi-resolution, multi-temporal products. NRCS presently lacks the local resources to fully integrate multi-source, multi-resolution soils data to the extent implied by the circular. Telecommunications and data integration tools may resolve this issue in the coming years and allow multi-partner networks/servers to share and integrate data real-time at the user's desktop.